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PAGE 01 STATE 064364

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PLEASE PASS RODMAN/ADAMS/BORG FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER

1. HEREWITH FULL TEXT NYTIMES EDITORIAL, MARCH 21,
ENTITLED "VIETNAM'S CRISIS."
2. NORTH VIETNAM'S WIDE-RANGING MILITARY ADVANCES--THE
FIRST RESUMPTION OF LARGE-SCALE WARFARE SINCE 1972--
AND SAIGON'S DRAMATIC WITHDRAWALS HAVE CREATED A NEW
SITUATION IN INDOCHINA. IT CANNOT FAIL TO AFFECT THE
POLITICS OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE AMERICAN DEBATE OVER AID
TO SAIGON.
3. THE WAR CLEARLY IS ON IN EARNEST, NOT JUST THE SMALL-
SCALE LOCAL ATTACKS IN DISPUTED AREAS THAT BOTH SIDES
BEGAN WITHIN THE FIRST DAYS AFTER THE JANUARY, 1973,
CEASEFIRE. HANOI SEES WITHIN ITS GRASP THE OPPORTUNITY

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 064364

TO REUNIFY VIETNAM BY FORCE; SAIGON HAS RETRENCHED THE

BETTER TO DEFEND THE MOST POPULOUS AREAS UNDER ITS CONTROL.

4. THE NEW WAR FINDS THE MILITARY BALANCE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED. THE PARIS ACCORDS PERMIT ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT, BUT NO INCREASE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

THEY PROHIBIT NOT ONLY INCREASES BUT EVEN REPLACEMENT THERE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS, WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO BE SLATED FOR ULTIMATE WITHDRAWAL. INSTEAD, NORTH VIETNAM'S COMBAT FORCES IN THE SOUTH DURING 1973 ALONE WERE INCREASED BY MORE THAN ONE-THIRD BY INFILTRATION TO AN ALL-TIME HIGH OF 190,000, PLUS 50,000 VIETCONG.

5. TANKS (SOVIET BUILT) HAVE BEEN QUADRUPLED IN NUMBER AS HAVE HEAVY ARTILLERY PIECES. SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN ENORMOUSLY INCREASED TO LEVELS SUFFICIENT FOR 18 TO 20 MONTHS OF COMBAT AT THE INTENSITY OF THE 1972 EASTER OFFENSIVE. ADDED SUPPLIES CAN BE MOVED FROM NORTH VIETNAM TO THE SAIGON AREA IN THREE WEEKS, INSTEAD OF THREE MONTHS, WITH THE AID OF AN OIL PIPELINE AND TWO DUAL-LANE, HARD-SURFACED HIGHWAYS BUILT THROUGH LAOS AND CAMBODIA TO REPLACE THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL.

6. MEANWHILE, THE SHARPLY REDUCED LEVEL OF AMERICAN AID FUNDS HAS PREVENTED REPLACEMENT OF SAIGON'S EQUIPMENT LOSSES. SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF PLANES, HELICOPTERS, TANKS AND OTHER COMBAT VEHICLES ARE OUT OF SERVICE FOR LACK OF SPARE PARTS AND CIVILIAN MAINTENANCE CREWS.

7. IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, AMERICAN MILITARY AID FUNDS HAVE BEEN STEADILY REDUCED BY CONGRESS. RATIONING OF FUEL HAS CUT THE OPERATING HOURS OF AIRCRAFT AND GROUND COMBAT VEHICLES TO ONE-HALF THEIR CAPABILITY; AMMUNITION USE HAS BEEN CUT BACK 30 PER CENT. LACK OF MOBILITY AND REDUCED AIR AND ARTILLERY SUPPORT HAVE LED TO LOSS OF OUTPOSTS, AN INCREASINGLY DEFENSIVE POSTURE AND HIGHER CASUALTIES.

8. THE SUPPLY DRAWDOWN AND THE UNCERTAINTIES OF FUTURE AID EVIDENTLY WERE KEY FACTORS IN PRESIDENT THIEU'S UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 064364

DECISION TO ABANDON VAST SPARSELY INHABITED AREAS IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS AND THE NORTHERNMOST PROVINCES OF SOUTH VIETNAM. THE WITHDRAWAL OF SAIGON FORCES TO SHORTER LINES AND THE DEFENSE PRIMARILY OF AGRICULTURAL, COASTAL AND URBAN AREAS CONTAINING 80 TO 90 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION AND ARABLE LAND MAY BE A SOUND STRATEGIC MOVE BUT ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT CANNOT YET BE ASSESSED.

9. IN THESE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD BE UNCONSCIONABLE FOR THE UNITED STATES, IN EFFECT, TO CUT OFF THE AMMUNITION SUPPLY FOR THE WEAPONS WITH WHICH WASHINGTON HAS ARMED THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. PRESIDENT FORD'S

PROPOSAL FOR A TERMINAL THREE-YEAR AID PROGRAM, IF ADEQUATELY FUNDED BY CONGRESS, WOULD REMOVE THE VIETNAM ISSUE FROM NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND GIVE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE A CHANCE TO REACH A STALEMATE THAT MIGHT ENCOURAGE HANOI TO TURN TO NEGOTIATION AND DOMESTIC RECONSTRUCTION. THAT PROSPECT WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED IF PRESIDENT THIEU WERE TO SEIZE THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY--WITH HIS NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION IMPRESSED WITH THE GRAVITY OF THE MILITARY SITUATION-- TO BROADEN HIS REGIME AND TO SET UP A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION. (END TEXT.) INGERSOLL

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